**Paul's Letter to the Romans:**

**"OUR DILEMMA: GOD'S SOLUTION"**

**Chapter 11:25-36**

### The Blind Man And The Elephant

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t was six men of Indostan

To learning much inclined,

Who went to see the Elephant, though all of them were blind,

That each by observation might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,

And happening to fall

Against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl:

"God bless me, but the Elephant is very like a wall!"

In this ancient fable from India the other sightless men think what they’re sensing is a spear, a snake, a tree, a fan and a rope.

Today Bibles must be smuggled in for growing legions of Christ’s followers in China. Entire villages have but a scrap of a page of a Bible, and mistakenly build an entire theology from that fragment.

Imagine if all you had was a sliver of Genesis ch. 7 where it reads, “God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people… so make yourself an ark….” Can’t you just see all the new boat builders popping up overnight in Hainan province in the city ironically named ***Baoting***! (That’s either spelled correctly, or my art director proofed that map also.)

Unlike those who get a smattering of truth, Paul unloads all nine yards in his letter to Christ’s followers in Rome. These sixteen chapters brilliantly explain how your life and mine can be forever changed not by the teachings of Christ - but by His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

***God, The Jews And The Gentiles***

The Jewish people are the redwoods of civilization’s family trees.

They’re courageous warriors, the writers of the Bible, their brave prophets faithfully called them back to God, their tribe of Judah produced Jesus through a virgin teen, and a handful of their pioneers took the world-shattering Gospel to many lands.

Why have they been beleaguered for 4,100 years? Why did they thumbs-down Jesus 2,000 years ago, and most do still today?

Paul tackles these questions with his great love for his fellow Jews.

In ch. 9 Israel is hand-picked to be blessed by God, as He’d promised to Abraham. In ch. 10 they’re nationally set aside temporarily by God for having blasted their Messiah. In ch. 11 they’ll have an eminent role when Christ sets up His kingdom on earth. Jews will be reunited in their homeland, worshipping Jesus as Messiah and King!

The Bible says this will usher in the Millennium -- 1,000 years when Christ will rule over all the earth. Meanwhile, in heaven, there’ll be no pollution, corruption, crime, and, if we’re lucky, no Barry Manilow records. And the Mariners will sweep the World Series.

‘Til then God has not shut out Jewish individuals, like Paul, but is, at this time, welcoming all races (Jews and Gentiles) to have an intimate, family relationship with Him because Christ’s death fully paid the debt that each of us owes to God for our sin.

In his first eight chapters Paul makes an airtight case that:

1. **Prior to placing our faith in Christ’s death on our behalf, we are all spiritually dead in our sins,** destined to spend eternity in unimaginable torment. The Bible calls this spiritual *death* (Romans 3:23, 6:23).
2. Because He loves all of us so much, and does NOT want to see us fry forever, **God sent His only Son to earth to die for each of us, providing the permanent solution to our sin problem.** We can access this solution only one way: by putting our faith totally in Christ, not by striving or hoping for it (Romans 3:24-28, 6:23).
3. **If we invite Him, God the Holy Spirit will actually take up residence in us** (Romans 7:15). He gives us the desire and power to say “no” to sin, gaining victory over it moment-by-moment, while becoming more like our Lord (Romans 8:29). And because He’s dealt with our sins once-and-for-all on the cross -- God never condemns us for being imperfect (Romans 8:28). And He promises that absolutely nothing or no one can separate us from Him, EVER (Romans 8:38-39)!

**Just for fun, let’s read Romans 11:1 through 12:2 (p. 843).**

***God’s Got A Secret***

***Romans 11:25-27***

DISCUSSION: What’s become clearer to you since we began digging into Romans?

When God decides to let us in on one of His divine mysteries, it’s a big deal. It’s a “secret” in that it was not foretold to the O.T. prophets, but was first made known to Paul by the resurrected Christ (Ephesians 2:11-12, 3:9; Colossians 1:6; Romans 16:25).

Christ came to bring salvation to and through the Jews (Matthew 15:24), but when they rejected Him, save for a few, their honchos went from being skeptical to antagonistic to executioner. After Christ’s resurrection, as Paul took the Gospel to the Gentiles, he usually stopped first in the Jewish temples where he was routinely stoned, beaten and jailed by Jewish leaders and their loyalists.

God’s program for the ages is a two-parter: (a) His PROPHECIED program re Israel (which started with Abraham) and (b) His MYSTERY program re the Body of Christ (which started with Paul and is still underway). Prophecy points to Christ’s Kingdom of God on earth and to the nation of Israel (Isaiah 60:1-3l; John 4:22; Acts 3:21). The Mystery points to Christ’s embracing all people directly on a one-to-one basis, coming to live within us, not in a temple, and making us citizens of heaven, not of His earthly Kingdom. Paul explains how this mystery relates to His plan for the nations:

1. God knows exactly how many Gentiles will be saved during this unprophecied time in which we’re now living while God has temporarily shelved the nation of Israel to offer His salvation to everyone. Israel’s “national hardening” is not a lockout of individual Jews since God has elected to save some of them, a “remnant,” while most continue to reject Jesus.
2. The calamitous days of Armageddon, late in the dreaded, seven-year Great Tribulation, must arrive before national Israel turns back to God. All nations will converge in the Valley of Megiddo to try to “destroy (the Jews) as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more” (Revelation 16:12-16; Psalm 83:4, Joel 3:9-15; Zechariah 12-14).

Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation to defeat Satan and his allies, judge the nations and deliver Israel, ending earth’s bloodiest battle (Revelation 19:11-21). There’s never been fireworks like this.

Hang on; this’ll make *Lord of the Rings* look like *Roadrunner* by comparison. One-third of our planet will be set ablaze. The sea becomes blood. One-third of the heavens go dark (Revelation 8:7-13). Every island disappears; every mountain is leveled (Revelation 16:20). Hundreds of millions of soldiers descend on tiny Israel. One-third of the world’s inhabitants are wiped out (Revelation 9:15-18). Two-thirds of the Jews die in this holocaust; all the rest will belong to Christ and will move with Him as their King into the thousand years of peace (Revelation 20:1-6).

All who choose Christ *before* this universal conflict erupts will have already been whisked off to heaven by Christ when He returns at the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). This event, announced only by Paul, finds Christ meeting the believers “in the clouds” whereas at the end of the Tribulation He arrives on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (Psalm 14:7, 53:6; Joel 3:16-17; Zechariah 8:3). After defeating Satan once for all, Christ establishes His kingdom on earth with Israel as His evangelist to the world! Move over, Billy Graham.

***Mercy Me, Who’s Got The Key?***

***Romans 11:28-32***

From what cesspool does anti-Semitism arise? Above all, from Gentile jealousy over God’s having made the Jews His chosen people. 4,000 years ago He pledged to Abram, father of the Jews, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” (Genesis 12:3). When God speaks, we can take it to the bank.

Our Gentile bio is stamped “Disobedient to God;” yet He welcomes us into His family, thanks to “(the Jews’) disobedience.” And “in the fullness of time” He will extend His unable-to-be-searched-out mercy to the Jewish nation, making Jerusalem the world’s capital where Christ will rule from David’s throne in the temple on Mount Zion.

Until then God has enclosed all of humanity in disobedience (like prey nabbed in a trap) so that He could show mercy to us all. We have no merit of our own to avoid God’s eternal wrath. The only key to unlock that trap is His mercy.

***What Does God Owe You?***

***Romans 11:33-36***

Man’s feats pale alongside God’s (Job 41:11; Isaiah 40:12-28; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 2:6). We can’t comprehend Him who’s (a) the Source-Creator-Reason for ALL things, (b) the Conduit-Filter through whom all must pass, and (c) the Destination of all things. Things like the solar system, all life forms, even everything invisible, us! ALL things! He’s keeping all the planets, moons and billions of stars in place, while we yawn and flop into bed.

God is deep. The Greek for “depth” here is *bathos*. Bathysphere: used to delve in the trackless expanse of the seas. Just look at your own life, how things have fallen together (or apart)! God has kindly arranged your life so you can decide what to do about His forgiveness offer. How wise is it to avoid this all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere-present Father? Delay as we may, but God is unavoidable, inevitable (Colossians 1:17; Acts 17:28).

***All Roads Lead To Heaven, Right?***

**DISCUSSION: What are some of the routes to gaining eternal life that seem right and fair to people?**

How to get to heaven? Solomon wrote, "There is a way that *seems* right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Thomas the disciple asked, “Lord, we don’t know where You’re going, so how can we know the way?” It won’t pass the tolerance test, but Jesus replied, "I am the *way*, the *truth* and the *life*; no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:5-6).

So, let’s swallow hard as our options are reduced to one. But since Christ is the Truth, we can *trust* His answer. Because He’s both *the* Life and the Giver-Sustainer of life, and Winner over death, we can depend on Him to grant us life with Him for time and eternity.

Faith in Christ alone -- not our zeal, moral behavior or good intentions -- is the only key that unlocks for us the benefits of His grace. Grace gives; faith receives. And God never reneges.

Have you endorsed God’s forgiveness check made payable in your name? When you do, He’ll credit your account with all the righteousness that His Son possesses! That means His forgiveness check won’t bounce. Here’s how to cash it before we break camp.

Just say, “God, why You love me enough to send Your Son Jesus to die for my sins -- I can’t fathom that. But I gladly now receive Your forgiveness. ‘Thank You’ seems so cheesy to say. Please teach me how to dedicate my life to knowing and honoring You. Amen.”

His Deal

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